7: Jenness--B45
116, 142, 516

(1914-16) 1923

Copper Eskimo

"HANDS AND FEET

The hands and feet are small, so that a European can seldom wear mittens and foot-gear that the Eskimos have made for themselves. Left-handed people are occasionally seen; clothing made by them can always be recognized because the stitches run from left to right instead of in the opposite direction. The wrists of the women seem more supple than those of the men; they possess, too, a greater delicacy and fineness of touch. Like many of our women, they habitually hold the little finger somewhat aloof from the ring finger. The feet are generally warm and moist. They seem often to be warped by the boots, which have a tendency to cramp the toes, especially the spring and summer water-boots."

7: Jenness--B45
116, 821, 516, 526

(1914-16) 1923

Copper Eskimo

"When the feet are cold the Eskimos kick them one against another, standing alternately on each foot, or else they jump into the air and kick them together."

a large hole where these protruded through and two small holes that marked the eye sockets. The ears he usually cut off at the roots, and pulled them out of the skin with his teeth at his leisure; but in certain circumstances, when it was forbidden to use a knife, he pulled free the outer integument on the spot.

In the late spring, when the caribou was putting on a new coat, the winter hair remained longest on the throat and belly. As this part was useless for clothing, the hair being prone to shed, the Eskimo frequently preserved only the part on which the new coat had already formed and threw the rest of the skin away. In such cases the preliminary incisions for removing the skin followed the outlines of the short hair. Often, however, the native anticipated the natural shedding of the winter hair by pulling it out with his thumb and fingers, leaving the new coat very short and spotted with white hairs, but in this condition highly prized. Later in the season, when the belly of the animal was covered with short white hair, invaluable for trimming, he made a cut along each flank and removed that part of the skin before detaching the remainder.

Blood stains were extracted by rubbing or stamping the skin in hard snow, which acted like damp blotting paper; or by steeping it in cold water and squeezing the hair. The Copper Eskimo woman was very careful not to allow a green skin to dry before scraping away with her curved knife the fat that still adhered to it; and as these scrapings were pure fat, she generally ate them at once, or put them aside for future consumption. Then she stretched the skin out to dry by pegging it to the ground with sticks or weighting down the edges with stones; the white belly skin and the large short-haired skins intended for bedding she always pegged down in order to stretch them as much as possible. When travelling across country day after day in the short Arctic summer, the skin was laid over the back of the pack or across a long pole; and at every halt it was stretched out afresh on the ground to hasten the drying, because a green skin weighed twice as much as a dry one. Once the skin was dry it could be laid aside and not touched again until needed. Then the owner sewed up the rents and scraped the whole underside with the copper- (now iron-) bladed scraper (*See* p. 84). The woman (or man, for the men often scraped skins while the women sewed them) sat back on the sleeping platform, or on the ground outside the tent, and stretched out the skin in front of her. Holding it tightly pinioned at the bottom between her crossed legs, she pulled it taut above the knee with her left hand and scraped rapidly downwards away from her with the right. A sudden relaxation of the leg, and a quick jerk, found her scraping in a new place. To the onlooker her body seemed strained and her attitude very uncomfortable, but long practice greatly reduced the fatigue, though the labour really was hard. Indeed I have seen the perspiration rolling down a woman's face as she scraped a skin outdoors when the temperature was below zero Fahrenheit.

The Copper Eskimo woman often ate the scrapings that came away during this operation, although they contained very little fat. To soften the skin still further she rubbed tepid water over its under surface, folded it up, and laid it on one side for a few hours. Then she scraped it again, this time with an instrument made from the shoulder blade of a musk-ox, which merely stretched and softened the skin without removing anything from its surface (*See* p. 83).

The stretching and softening of the skin was usually the last process it underwent before it was made up into clothing. If, however, the woman desired the skin without fur, as for making the upper legs of her long boots, she scraped the hair from the dry skin with her curved knife. Copper Eskimo clothing was often decorated with red, black, or white bands; the white was the natural colour of the skin; the red was produced by rubbing with litharge; and the black parts were either untanned sealskin, or else seal or caribou skin stained with galena. Ordinary dirt stains on white deerskin could be removed with dry snow.

28: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1946
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

lines, harpoon lines, and lashings of various kinds. No doubt the Copper Eskimo in emergencies made use of sinew from other sources, for the Mackenzie Delta natives sometimes use the sinew on the tail of the fox, which is about a foot long and said to be of excellent quality. 283

After the flesh had been carefully scraped away the sinew was allowed to dry a little; but as prolonged exposure to the heat of the sun rendered it stiff and brittle, it was generally stored away at once in a bag. The value of a slab of back sinew was fairly high everywhere along the Arctic coast.[1] Caribou were very abundant in the Copper Eskimo country until about 1919, but in the absence of linen or cotton thread—which in any case is less suitable for skin garments—sinew was in such great demand that it was constantly traded from one family or group to another. [435] [136] [437]

For ordinary sewing a thin strand was stripped off the slab with the teeth or thumb nail, drawn through the teeth to remove all roughness, and rolled against the cheek to twist it into a single smooth thread. Waterboots, however, called for a stouter three-ply thread, made by the women and girls in the house, where they fastened the ends of the threads to the drying rack, and caught the middle strand between the second and third fingers while they crossed the two outer ones with the thumbs and index fingers. Fishing lines of leg sinew were plaited similarly of three strands, but the harpoon lines, which required to be flat, had from four to eight strands, sometimes even more. Twisting, as with rope, was an unknown art.

Sewing Bags and Baskets. A Copper Eskimo woman without her needle and thread would have been as uncomfortable as a European housewife without her knitting. Sewing was no impediment to gossip: the woman sat on the sleeping skins, her legs doubled under her or stretched out in front, and plied her needle and her tongue at the same rate. Always she sewed from right to left; only a left-handed person sewed in the opposite direction. She held the thimble on the first finger (not on the middle, as we do), and pushed the needle through the skin with the side of the thimble, not with its top, if indeed it had a top. Then she caught the point between the thumb and middle finger, drew the needle out, turned it on its side, and with her thimble behind it pulled through the thread and reinserted the needle for the next stitch. Usually she did not tauten the thread until the second stitch. 294 462 [516] [521]

There was more sewing to be done at certain seasons than at others. Thus, in the autumn, all the new clothing for the winter had to be finished before the sun disappeared below the horizon for the long winter night. The women then sewed from early morning until late at night, with only brief respites to cook the meals or to pass the time of day with neighbours. A woman who had no children to sew for was, of course, less busy; the mother of a family was obliged not only to make the clothes for the whole household, but to train her girls to be dressmakers also. The latter began their training with odd scraps of skin, which they learned to join with neat close stitches. Later, they mended rents in their own clothing, and made dolls fully clothed from head to foot. Many men could make their own trousers and socks, and even sealskin shoes in an emergency; but only a very few could cut out a well-fitting coat or make a pair of waterboots that would really keep out the water. Even the women never attained great skill in these last-mentioned tasks until long after marriage, and a young wife often sought the assistance of an older relative or friend. [221] 294 462 868

The work-basket of most women was a bag of caribou or some other skin, or else, more rarely, a neatly worked basket of coiled willow twigs held in place with willow-bark stitching (Figures 91, 92). All the baskets that I saw were 415 [285]

[1] In 1914 the price of one slab of reindeer back sinew at Barrow, Alaska, was $1.

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Ikpuck and Icehouse.

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Photo by J. R. Cox.

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The People of the Twilight.

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Photo by G. H. Wilkins.

Dance-songs were their chronicles of current events.

[P. 128-D]

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Hungry children gathered round our tent.

Photo by J. R. Cox.

She carried it everywhere on her back.

[P. 128-E]

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
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visible, but two hares started up beneath our feet and fled to the extreme edge of the snow-patch. They seemed to know that their coats had not yet changed to a summer brown, for they crouched there, half invisible, until we almost walked on top of them; then, flashing white on the dull clay, they sped across to the next snow-patch and again crouched motionless. But a hunter who lives by the chase feels no pity for his victims, and both animals, despite their pathetic ruses, soon dangled over The Runner's shoulder.

The sky clouded in the afternoon, and a fierce snowstorm broke in our faces, blotting everything from view. It was useless to keep on travelling, for a caribou might pass unseen within ten yards of us; it was equally useless to turn back and wander for hours vainly seeking the camp. We looked around for shelter. There was none; no cliff, not even a boulder. The Runner and I sat on the snow, shoulder to shoulder, backs to the wind; while Leaf, his wife, crouched in the angle between our outstretched legs. After a long half-hour the storm began to pass over. When I mentioned the change to my companions Leaf raised her head and smiled. The Runner did not hear; with folded arms and head drooping on his chest he was sleeping.

We circled back toward the tents after the gale abated, and in spite of the light fog that still hung over the landscape stumbled on two young bulls, both